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BOOK NUMBER

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SHORT SENTENCES MAKE SENSE

Say one and only one thing in each sentence. Put qualifying WHICH or THAT clauses in your next sentence. It's not the long sentence that causes trouble, it's the complex sentence with too many ideas. Sometimes, use a colon or semi-colon to tie related ideas together; this helps break up long sentences; this helps vary sentence length. (Count as 3 sentences.)

- 1. Here's a 55-word sentence with too many ideas:

Whether the kitchen is to be newly constructed or remodeled, the best way to begin a plan is to think of the activities to be carried on there, and then work out the space needed and the arrangement of equipment and supplies which will require the fewest steps and motions in getting the work done.

- 2. Say it in 3 sentences, something like this:

Whether your kitchen is to be newly constructed or remodeled, the best way to begin a plan is to think of what you will do there. Then work out the space you need; think through how to arrange your equipment and supplies so as to use the fewest steps and motions to get your work done. (Sentences average 18 words. One sentence is 26 words; one, 7 words; last sentence, 23 words. Vary sentence length.)

- 3. Long abstract words (impersonal verbals) make this difficult reading:

Good seed is basic in successful crop production. Supplying complete variety information in condensed form is a difficult task but this annual listing of recommended varieties can be a valuable guide. With the increased use of more adequate soil treatments, the genetic limitations on crop production have become more important. Therefore, the use of high quality, recleaned, weed-free, high-germinating seed of adapted varieties cannot be too highly stressed. The difference in acre cost between low quality and well-bred, high quality seed is surprisingly small. Acre yield increases, along with quality improvement, will pay a good return for the small increase in investment in good seed. - 106 words. Sl - 18 words (good); wl - 170 syllables (bad); pw and ps - 0 - impersonal.

Revision: Change verbals back to verbs, put "people" in front of verbs; talk to you:

You must have good seed to produce good crops. This leaflet lists some recommended varieties to help you select the right seed.

With more adequate soil treatments, genetic limitations on crop production have become more important. It's important that you use high quality seed: recleaned, weed-free, and high germinating seed.

The difference in acre cost between low quality and well-bred, high quality seed is surprisingly small. The small increase you pay for good seed will bring you more yield per acre plus highest quality crops. 85 words sl-14; wl-143; pw-5; ps-4 (About 7th grade level.)

→ Bronna,

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Prepared for discussion purposes by Amy Cowing, Extension Analyst, Division of Extension Research and Training, for use in Columbia, Missouri, August 26, 1955

## HOW YOUR WRITING READS

To give you an idea of how well you are writing for your average (8th-9th grade) readers, we tested 100-word samples in 29 recent Missouri extension publications. We used the Flesch Readability Formula No. 2 to estimate the reading difficulty of 94 samples - - 9,400 words in all.

The Flesch Formula measures sentence length (sl) in words, and word length (wl) in syllables to estimate Reading Ease (R.E.). The Formula measures percentage of personal words (pw) and personal sentences (ps) to estimate Human Interest (H.I.).

The Flesch Formula gives you a rough estimate of whether or not you are writing over your readers' heads. It's like a thermometer: It registers the degree of "how easy" or "how hard" your writing is to read. It helps you compare your writing with magazines of known difficulty. It helps you check your readability levels with the Census schooling figures of the people in your area.

The Formula does not measure all factors that enter into getting your ideas across to readers: such factors as illustrations, layout, size of type, white space, or color of paper and ink. It does not test how well you select, sift, and sort your facts. All these points influence readability - the know-how of making sense for readers.

Here is how the 94 samples tested in 29 extension publications check out:

School Grade	39 samples in 15 <u>agriculture</u> publications	20 samples in 5 home <u>economics</u> publications	35 samples in 9 <u>4-H</u> publications
College	9 samples 44%	2 samples 20%	1 sample 17%
High school	8 " "	2 " "	5 " "
8th-9th grade	11 samples	7 samples	6 samples
7th " "	7 " 56%	8 " 80%	12 " 83%
6th " "	4 " "	1 " "	9 " "
5th " "			2 " "

Less than half the samples tested in your agricultural publications and one-fifth of the samples in your home economics publications are above the 8th-9th grade reading level. These samples will probably be hard reading for average Missouri readers who have from 8-9 years of schooling.

As a rule home economics publications are easier reading than agricultural. This is partly due to the nature of the subject matter; partly due to better planning and use of more cookbook English, (one of best ways to communicate ideas clearly)

4-H publications are usually the easiest to read; authors are more conscious of writing for their readers. Authors do a better job of sifting facts. They don't tell all they know about a subject; just enough facts to tell the story.





